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ABSTRACT

A classroom visit by an international visitor is potentially a unique educational experience. Students have an opportunity to: increase awareness of their own values and of their foundation in the sociocultural patterns of their natural family, community, and nation; increase capacity for empathetic interpersonal relations; and become aware of global issues that affect entire societies and of the interdependence of the world. This checklist is designed to encourage teachers to invite visitors to the classroom, to assist them in making visitors feel welcome, and to maximize the educational value of the experience. Instructions for the organizer of the visit, as well as for the teacher are included. There are guidelines for preparing the class/school for the visit and suggestions for extending the experience beyond the actual meeting. (Author/GEA)

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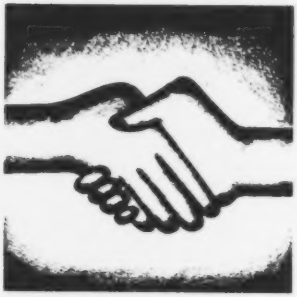
# HOSTING FOREIGN VISITORS IN THE CLASSROOM

## A CHECKLIST ✓

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## INTRODUCTION

Each year people throughout the world move to Alaska, live in our communities and study in our schools. Visiting teachers from Australia, Japan and other nations teach in Alaska classrooms. Exchange students study in our high schools and on university campuses. Military personnel with a wealth of travel experience serve on our bases. Alaska's wealth of natural resources brings international businesspeople, goverment officials and diplomats to this vast marketplace. Relatives and tourists with unique cultural backgrounds and experiences come from all over the world to see *The Great Land*. All these people are possible classroom resources.

A classroom visit by an international visitor is potentially a special educational experience. Students have an opportunity to:

- increase awareness of their own values and of their foundation in the sociocultural patterns of their natural family, community and nation;
- increase capacity for empathetic interpersonal relations;
- become aware of global issues that affect entire societies and of the interdependence of the world.

This *Checklist* is designed to encourage you to invite visitors to the classroom, to assist you in making them feel welcome and to maximize the educational value of the experience. Your suggestions and comments for revising these hospitality and educational tips will be used as the *Checklist* is modified on a periodic basis. Please send your ideas to the address below.

Have a wonderful visit!

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## *Before the Visit...*

**For Organizers**

- ❒ Obtain biographical information about guest and correct spelling and pronunciation of your guest's name; make sure all people involved receive this information.
- ❒ Organize housing and advise your visitor in advance of the accomodations.
- ❒ Provide all parties involved with your visitor's itinerary.
- ❒ Plan to take the visitor on a tour of the community.
- ❒ Note any free time the visitor may have and offer alternative entertainment and/or recreational activities prior to the guest's arrival.
- ❒ Have "Plan B" in case of last-minute schedule changes, flight delays, etc.
- ❒ Provide for transportation for the visitor to/from the school site.
- ❒ Formally introduce the visitor to school administrator and teacher.
- ❒ Arrange for press coverage of the visitor's stay.

**For Teachers**

- ❑ Gather information about your guest's personal background.
- ❑ Learn the correct pronunciation of your guest's name and teach it to the students.
- ❑ Write a short letter to the visitor to be mailed in advance or presented at the time of the visit containing information about the community and about the class (size, ages, teacher's name, etc.)
- ❑ Learn if there will be a translator. Teach students how to talk with a guest through a translator (that is, to direct questions and comments to the person spoken to, rather than to the translator).
- ❑ Relate the upcoming visit to something being studied in class, if possible, or suggest another, more appropriate, class the visitor might visit.
- ❑ Establish goals for the visit with your class. Informal interaction and affective goals should be considered along with the above content-related objectives.
- ❑ Plan adequate time for the visit. Schedule activities and an exchange commensurate with the time available.
- ❑ Consider an assembly or other short-term activity which involves the entire school population.
- ❑ Involve parents in the upcoming event, giving them information about the visit in advance through school/class newsletters or phone calls.

## *Preparing Your Class...*

- ❒ Develop an information base to compare similarities and differences between U.S. and the visitor's country in terms of:

  - ✲ schools
  - ✲ games
  - ✲ culture
  - ✲ geography
  - ✲ economics
  - ✲ history
  - ✲ religion

- ❒ High schoolers might learn how the following are viewed from the visitor's perspective: U.S. foreign policy, trade, historical events in country, cultural bias, debt problems, population, national image, women's role, etc.

- ❒ Identify and discuss stereotypes and preconceptions.

- ❒ Use the visit as an opportunity to have your students hone basic research skills. Have students write reports on various aspects of life in visitor's country before or after the visit.

- ❒ Take field trips to find culturally relevant aspects of the local community (multinational businesses, ethnic restaurants, shops, etc.) either before or after guest's visit.

## *Preparing Your Class, continued...*

- ❒ Plan a language activity, introducing students to the idea of thinking and communicating in a language other than their own. Are words in our language similar to words in their language?

- ❒ Learn how to greet person in his/her own language. Have a big welcome sign on door with your visitor's name on it, both in the students' language and the guest's.

- ❒ Develop questions for your visitor in advance. Class, teacher, or committees might research possible answers to the questions to be cross-checked with the visitor's information, if possible.

- ❒ Display a map of the visitor's country. Show map outline in relation to Alaska's geographic location, size, etc. Do any of the children have relatives from this country? Ancestors?

- ❒ Prepare a bulletin board demonstrating students' knowledge of the guest's country.

- ❒ Discuss how visitors form impressions of our country and students. Students should be told what type of behavior is expected of them; for example, students should raise their hands to be recognized by the visitor.

- ❒ Select a class representative to offer greetings from the entire class, a type of formal welcome. You may want your class to practice a formal response to a greeting.

## *Preparing Your Class, continued...*

- ❒ Have something to share with visitor (food, gifts, postcards of community, etc). Design some sort of interaction with visitor: clothing, stories, family customs and values, presentation of a lesson which could be taught at home, etc.

- ❒ Prepare to be flexible with schedule if visitors are delayed en route.

## The Big Day Arrives...

- ❑ Formally introduce visitor to school administrator, staff, and class.
- ❑ Give a tour of your school and invite the principal to participate in your class visit.
- ❑ Encourage your visitor to share his/her personal history with the class. Even if he/she is lecturing on a global issue, time should be allotted for personal interaction and photo sharing. Note that in some cultures (e.g., Middle Eastern Moslem) personal sharing is not considered appropriate. Respect this cultural difference in these cases.
- ❑ This is a channel for cross-cultural communication! Share customs, folklore, traditions, politics, objects of daily life, homes, students' lives, school information, festivals, cultural dress, indigenous crafts, sports, instruments.
- ❑ Allow time for students to ask questions. Encourage substantive visitor/student exchanges. Be friendly, interested and knowledgeable. Focus on discussion of cultural similarities and differences.
- ❑ Facilitate interaction and maintain discipline.
- ❑ Offer to take the visitor to lunch or host them for lunch at the school. Make any appropriate reservations. Be sensitive to dietary laws which may differ from your own.
- ❑ Discuss the possibility of a Sister School relationship with a school in your visitor's country.

## *After the Visit...*

- ❒ Have your class, and anyone else involved in the visit, write a thank-you note to your visitor.
- ❒ Maximize the experience by talking and writing about it!
- ❒ Have students plan and execute an international fair.
- ❒ Explore the possibility of parents' hosting international exchange students or visitors in the future.
- ❒ Send cards to your visitor on important national or religious holidays, for both the United States and the visitor's country.